

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 L-03 DHA-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DODE-00

PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /047 W

-----110453Z 110672 /15

R 101206Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1818

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

ANCONSUL MADRAS 5936

CONFIDENTIAL NEW DELHI 3505

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, IN

SUBJECT: LABOR--INCREASE IN STRIKES AND PROTESTS

REF: NEW DELHI A-45

1. AS REPORTED REFAIR, WITH THE EASING OF THE EMERGENCY IN THIS ELECTORAL PERIOD, LABOR IS NOW TESTING THE WATERS OF THIS NEW FREEDOM BY CALLING STRIKES AND OTHER FORMS OF PROTEST ACTIVITIES. THE NEWSPAPERmen--JOURNALISTS, PRESSMEN, AND OTHERS--WERE THE FIRST TO CALL A STRIKE ON A NATION-WIDE BASIS AND DID SO WITH A ONE DAY WORK STOPPAGE ON MARCH 9. AS A RESULT VIRTUALLY NO PAPERS APPEARED THE FOLLOWING DAY. THE OFFICIAL WIRE SERVICE, SAMACHAR, WAS ALSO DOWN. THE STRIKE WAS DIRECTED AT THE GOI'S FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERIM WAGE RELIEF AGREED TO BY THE GOVERNMENT-CONSTITUTED WAGE BOARD. (COMMENT: THE STRIKE CALL BY THE INDIAN FEDERATION OF WORKING JOURNALISTS, INDEPENDENT, WAS GIVEN SEVERAL DAYS IN ADVANCE. DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE EMERGENCY, THE UNION LEADERS PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN ARRESTED.)

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2. SINCE ELECTIONEERING BEGAN, SHORT TERM STRIKES, SOME WILCAT, AND DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE BEEN REPORTED FROM CALCUTTA AND MADRAS. THE GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN ON FEB. 28 ISSUED AN ORDER BANNING STRIKES AMONG ITS EMPLOYEES IN ANTICIPATION OF A STRIKE. ON MARCH 8 IT CONCEDED A MAJOR DEMAND BY INCREASING THEIR COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE RETROACTIVE TO SEPTEMBER 1976.

3. COMMENT: WHAT WE ARE WITNESSING CANNOT BE CHARACTERIZED AS A MOVEMENT. EXCEPT FOR THE CLOSURE OF THE NEWSPAPERS, THE STRIKES AND PROTESTS HAVE BEEN LIMITED BOTH IN SIZE AND REGION. A SENIOR GOI LABOR MINISTRY OFFICIAL, WHO HAS BEEN A RELIABLE SOURCE, DECLINED TO VIEW THESE RECENT ACTIVITIES AS SERIOUS. NEVERTHELESS, COMPARED TO THE DOCILITY OF LABOR DURING THE EMERGENCY, THEY COULD BE THE BEGINNING OF A PERIOD OF GREATER LABOR UNREST AND AGITATION. WE WOULD EXPECT WORKERS TO PUSH THEIR DEMANDS, ESPECIALLY DURING THE REMAINING DAYS OF THE ELECTORAL PERIOD, UNTIL THE NEW GOVERNMENT SETS THE DIRECTION FOR ITS LABOR POLICY, EITHER BY REIMPOSING THE VIGORS OF THE EMERGENCY OR FINDING ALTERNATE MEANS TO ENSURE LABOR PEACE. WHILE SOME OF THE CURRENT PROTEST ACTIVITY IS EXPLAINABLE AS A RELEASE OF FRUSTRATIONS PENT-UP DURING THE EMERGENCY, IT IS ALSO A REACTION BY THE WORKERS TO INCREASING PRICES. ALTHOUGH THE AVERAGE MONTHLY CONSUMER PRICE INDEX FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS WAS 7.7 PERCENT LOWER FOR 1976 COMPARED TO 1975, THE INDEX FOR DECEMBER 1976 WAS ABOUT 7 PERCENT HIGHER THAN THAT FOR MARCH 1976. THE WHOLESALE PRICE INDEX BETWEEN FEBRUARY 1976 AND FEBRUARY 1977 INCREASED APPROXIMATELY 10 PERCENT.

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## Message Attributes

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**Executive Order:** GS  
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